1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
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765 of the man's personal basket. A piece of a spear that has been broken
628 off and left in the body of the victim is also used as a relic. When a man has been wounded he sometimes soaks pieces of paper bark in his blood and presents them to his relatives to be used as reminders of their duty to compensate him for his injury by helping him kill or wound a member of the offending man's clan. When a man obtains one of the relics, it is an almost absolute demand on him to kill a member of the slayer's group. This is particularly true if it is given to a young man. The older men usually give their relics to the younger males.

765 The spirit of the dead is supposed to go with the relic, and the relic
778 has magic power. It can be thrown into an intended victim's fire and cause him to go to sleep, or the possessor can blow his breath against
789 it and produce the same effect. It is often carried in the mouth during a battle to make an opponent tired and heavy-footed and to prevent him from dodging spears. Relics play a prominent part in all feuds.

682 Occasionally men are killed within the clan, but this is not a cause for war or retaliation by members of the clan or by near relatives from without the clan. A man may be such a notorious killer and cause so much trouble for his own clansmen that the entire group will kill him to stop further disturbances. At times men are slain by their own
688 clan for breaking ceremonial taboos, such as divulging secrets of the old men to the women or the uninitiated, and for viewing ceremonial objects before their initiation.

672 If a fight is on and a near relative is accidentally hit by a club or
576 spear, the person responsible hits himself on the head while saying he is sorry. Here, too, the underlying idea is to inflict an injury on the responsible person similar to the one the injured party suffered.

152 Military honor also contributes its share to the causes for war. A man will brave the spears of a whole clan to demonstrate his fearlessness.
517 The writer has seen two brothers defy fifteen men in a spear fight. The Murngin people are a brave and courageous group. Fear of death
626 while in a fight is seldom seen. A man who shows an unwillingness to fight is called a woman and held in extreme contempt.

628 The fundamental principle underlying all the causes of Murngin
681 warfare is that of reciprocity: if a harm has been done to an individual
181 or a group, it is felt by the injured people that they must repay the ones who have harmed them by an injury that at least equals the one they have suffered. When the total cultural situation of Murngin life is
181 further examined, this negative reciprocation is found to fit into a

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
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either for good or ill. Thus there are found few natural leaders among these people, a man's individuality being submerged in the life of his horde or tribe. This same fact, coupled with the extreme isolation in which this race has for centuries lived, has also served to stultify progress.

Only by a man of exceptionally forceful character could reforms be instituted, and life has consequently gone on practically unchanged for countless generations.

Toward those whose friendship has been proved these aborigines show a splendid spirit of loyalty. Those who treat them in a fair and friendly fashion will receive fair dealing and devoted friendship in return.

Arts and Crafts

The weapons and utensils used throughout this area correspond to the usual aboriginal type, but include a number of local variations. Little use is made of any weapon other than the spear, though clubs of several types are used to a limited extent, as also are boomerangs.

There are many varieties of wooden spears, barbed and unbarbed, some of which have the head and the haft fashioned out of a single piece of hardwood in a very remarkable way. Flaked stone spear-heads are much used, particularly for fighting, and these heads are traded over wide distances.

The use of iron, particularly for spear-heads and cutting implements, has been known for many decades, this material being obtained in limited quantities from the old traders from Macassar. Only boomerangs of a heavy type are used, and these are by no means common. The light, return boomerang is unknown, as is also the shield.

Many types of "dilly-bag" are made, some of which are of such fine texture as to retain water. Others are highly decorated with feathers or fur woven in during manufacture. The material used in most cases is the split leaf of the pandanus palm. Other bags are made of string knotted very neatly and evenly in an open mesh. Fish nets are also constructed in the same way.

Excellent string is manufactured from bark fibre, grass, fur, and human hair, and is used for a wide variety of purposes. Much of it designed for ceremonial purposes is decorated with feathers interwoven during spinning. Strong rope is made of bark fibre or grass, and used in the harpooning of turtle, dugong, or porpoise, and for the mooring of canoes.

ŋälä	⇌	*käminyarr* (mother's father—daughter's son and daughter).
kawawal	⇌	*wäkku* (mother's brother—sister's son and daughter).
duwe	⇌	*källai* (mother's brother's or father's sister's son and daughter).
mari	⇌	*kutara* (mother's mother's brother—sister's daughter's son and daughter).
wawa	⇌	*yukko yukko* (elder brother—younger brother).
bapa n'ymokunin	⇌	*katu* (father's younger brother—son and daughter).
maralkor	⇌	*korroŋ* (mother's mother's brother's son—father's sister's daughter's son and daughter).

People who stand in the *kumur märnda* relationship are regarded as partners facing one another in the exchange system, and each has the obligation to give gifts of the appropriate order. Each strives to pass to the other, his partner in the *kumur mändji* relationship, gifts of the kind appropriate to the *kumur* in which he stands, and the partner in turn must reciprocate, though not necessarily immediately. This exchange is not in any sense barter although circulation of goods on a large scale results. Its primary object, to the native, is not merely to gain goods, for to these people the ceremonial aspect is the important one. As my informant said: "Meaning, to give all the time—*kumur märnda ŋällinya* (partners together, we two)—all the time, till die". i.e. the objective of each is to give in order to maintain and affirm the bond between each *kumur* pair, until they die, when their children carry it on. If two men die who are *kumuryanna märnda*, their wives may take over the relationship, and carry on the ritual exchange. The importance of the *ceremonial* aspect, and the fact that this relationship is

different from that of pure economic exchange, is indicated by the use of a special term, *wetj*, which means "to give", but in a ceremonial sense, a sense quite distinct from that for which the ordinary word for giving—*gurrupän*, (*gurrupulo*, imperative), is used. Again, my informant, Raiwälla of Mildjiŋi, in explaining the ceremonial exchange cycle, the *kumur märnda* relationship in which he was a very active participant, exclaimed, "If you have a good thing here, might be you give it to me. You think, 'I give it to him. I like to give it to him.' All right, *wetj gurrupulo närräna*[43] (you give to me)." To illustrate further the meaning of *wetj*, this man added, "If he asks, you give it to him because he asks. But if you give it yourself—that is *wetj*—that is *marr*, because you *like* to give it to him." "*Djal ni gurrupänaraa*," he added in the language, i.e. it is *marr*[44] because you give it freely, spontaneously, from a desire to give and not because he has asked for it. Freely rendered, "If you have something you value, perhaps you may give it spontaneously to me, your partner in the ceremonial exchange cycle. Or you may think about it and waver."

Like (desire) you to give,

In this phrase my informant expresses the momentary hesitance, the reluctance of a man with something he prizes, and would like to possess himself, to pass it on to his partner in the *kumur märnda* relationship. He thinks about it and wavers—but finally he decides to give it. The

[43] A little of the native text has been retained, chiefly because it is difficult to find the exact equivalent in English.

[44] *Marr* has been defined (page 37) in part as "spiritual power" but it means much more than this. It is also the "power to respond" and is generally associated in some way with personal things. *Marr* is the "power", the "drive" which lies behind ritual and is the force which brings good and bad "luck", success in hunting.

informant explains this feeling, and contrasts the spirit in which such a gift is given, in these circumstances, with one which is given merely in response to a request. He conceives his giving within the ceremonial cycle—which is of the type called *wetj*—as due to *marr*, to the force, the ritual urge, (stronger, even, than the desire to retain and possess *gerri*) to pass them on and either to increase thereby his own prestige in the *kumur märnda* relationship, or to acquit himself of an existing obligation in the quarter to which he sends it.

Again the same informant, Raiwälla of Mildjiŋi clan on the Lower Glyde River, a fine and intelligent native, with a great number of partners in this ceremonial exchange system, widely dispersed throughout Central Arnhem Land, said of his two younger half-brothers (from the same mother) who belonged to Ritar'ŋo clan and who were *kumur djalk* to him: "Wuruwul and ŋälländir (his half-brothers) bring *ŋämbi djalk* . . . *must* I give *wetj*." i.e. "They bring stone spear heads" (from ŋillipidji the appropriate *kumur* in the exchange cycle) "and I *must* reciprocate."

To fail to repay these gifts quickly, even with his own half-brothers, would be to lose face, to suffer in prestige—perhaps even to be passed over next time a gift in the ceremonial exchange system was available. Some idea of the importance of the smooth operation of the ceremonial exchange cycle, and of the extent to which it induces a state of *euphoria* or ritual well-being, may be gathered from the answer which I received from this same informant (Raiwälla) to a question which I had put to him.

When Raiwälla listed *bäti mindjalpi* (a special type of woven basket carried by men to contain their personal possessions) among the *gerri* which he received from *kumur*

577 431 602 *miwait*, I asked him if he did not make these *mindjalpi* himself. He replied "I make them, but different country—he must give me *wetj*—like this" (holding his hand out). "If you give me, I can't say 'I don't want it' because this arm belong him goes this way—it points along me. *Murr* (goodwill, spiritual power) goes this way, I must take it. *Wetj* is like *murr*."

182 431 435 But if it is the sociological bond, the *kumuryanna märnda* relationship, which is so much stressed by the natives, this ceremonial exchange has also an economic side which is no less important than the ritual, and which accompanies it, taking advantage of the motive force and the mechanism and driving force of the more obvious ceremonial exchange. Under cover of the great ceremonial exchange system, of which an outline only has been given, large quantities of *gerri* pass from one territory to another, and although in some cases, as with the *bäti* (basket) called *mindjalpi*, the actual article itself varies little if at all from a similar object of local manufacture, it has special value, *virtu*, by reason of the fact that it has been made in another country. This is particularly true of spears, which circulate freely throughout the area, and are valued often because they are believed to possess special merit derived from their place of origin—because they acquire a halo of glamour and romance by reason of the way in which they are acquired; because they have *murr*. And although the natives still retain "ordinary", (non-sacred) objects, this gives those acquired by ceremonial exchange a history, a background, a personality which lifts them above other *wäkkinyu* objects and gives them a greatly enhanced value in the eyes of people who receive them.

182 431 Here then, is the nucleus of a great system of exchange, which, though it differs in many respects from our own established ideas of trade or barter, supplies an incentive,

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
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It is probable that under ordinary conditions, if the circulation of these axes depended on straight-out exchange or barter, their value to the seafaring peoples of the north and east coasts of Arnhem Land, for the cutting of dugout canoes, would have been such that the people would have parted with them reluctantly. But under the ceremonial exchange system, and the compelling need to build up goodwill and to increase their prestige by the circulation of *gerri*, and especially to make reciprocal gifts for those already received, the people on the sea coast, who received these axes first, must have been compelled to pass many of them rapidly southward to partners in *kumur djalk* and *kumur kärin*. Of this circulation of *gerri* an informant remarked—"I must make road there". It is significant that he used the words "must" and "road". The word "road" my informant translated first as *kumur*, then as *kumur dukarr*—conceiving the movement of *gerri* as so regular and extensive as to make a beaten path or "road", *dukarr*, a conception to which reference was made on page 69 above.

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But again it must be remembered that the *social* obligations of the ceremonial exchange cycle, which to the natives are the obvious and vitally important ones, far outweigh the economic exchange which accompanies it, and sometimes persist after the actual need for its *gerri* has passed, as in the case of the iron spear heads from Blue Mud Bay which were passing down to the Roper River long after this area had become settled.

There is little doubt that a ceremonial exchange system existed in Arnhem Land before the coming of the visitors from Indonesia and it is not intended to suggest that the exchange system in this territory depends on the coming of these seafaring visitors. But its orientation at the present time, and its most important "drives" certainly owe much

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to the impact of Indonesian culture. The giving and exchange of gifts, of *gerri*, is an important accompaniment of much of the ritual that takes place in Arnhem Land and is an integral part of the behaviour which is obligatory between relatives of certain orders within the kinship system. A number of special relationships, of which one, *tjukarno*, is mentioned on page 75, are also characterised by the exchange of possessions.

And again, the fact must be stressed that the ceremonial exchange cycle is not merely a matter of exchange or barter, although the economic exchange is a vital accompaniment, but that a man having once established a place in the *kumur märnda* relationship, must reciprocate with the appropriate *gerri*. As one of my informants said (page 79), "*Must* I give *wetj*"—"I *must* reciprocate." And again, when he is offered a gift, a man cannot refuse it—he *must* accept it—and after holding it for the period permitted by custom, pass it on to one of his partners. When people of an inland clan, who are partners in the *kumur djalk* and *kumur kärin* directions, brought big ceremonial presentations of flint spear heads, boomerangs, forehead fillets (*källämba*) and large ceremonial hair belts and other *gerri*, to their exchange partners in *kumur muadäk* the people would have no choice. They would be obliged to accept the *gerri* brought by the visitors and to reciprocate. The *gerri* appropriate to each quarter are defined by tradition, and again, it was stated that tradition lays down the rule that *gerri* from one *kumur* may not return to the quarter in which they originated. The practical effect of this custom would be to make it difficult for the people of the coast to have a monopoly of iron implements, such as axes, knives, iron spear heads, wire for fish spears, even if they wished to do so. It would be impossible for them to possess these without the knowledge

9: Thomson E-5 (1935-1943)1949
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of their immediate neighbours who could solicit such *gerri* by themselves making substantial ceremonial presentations, requiring appropriate return gifts.

The social implication of the *kumur märnda* relationship is such that if the inland people maintain a constant stream of *gerri* to their neighbours to the north, these must be reciprocated, with resultant increase in the volume and tempo of the exchange cycle. It will be evident that under this system it would be impossible for any man to accumulate, or to hold permanently, much *gerri*. To do so would mean to default in his obligations to exchange partners. He would lose prestige and social status. His social personality would suffer, which, to these people, would far outweigh the value of the possessions. The functional importance of the exchange system and the vital part it plays in the social and ceremonial life of the people of Arnhem Land, as well as the stimulus which it must have received through the coming of the Macassar visitors, is evident. The Macassar influence is important not merely as a source of the greatly valued *muadäk*, but also for the incentive which this gave to the inland groups to send up *gerri* to *kumur muadäk*, which they knew must be reciprocated with the articles which they valued, and which were most important to their own social life and economy. And by no means the least important feature of the ceremonial exchange cycle was the part it played in overcoming the effect of the segmentary organisation, which would tend normally to restrict communication, a fact to which reference has already been made.

The facts which have been presented, although they deal with one relationship only, will suffice to show that the influence of the Macassar visitors on the economic life and ceremonial exchange cycle of the natives of Arnhem Land

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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the nomad's continuous thought and consideration in breaking branches, waiting at waterholes till the white man drinks first, breaking twigs for him to sleep on, and offering him the choicest parts of their scanty food. When the track has led through mangrove swamps they have paused on the edge of the mud and apologized for having led me into the mess; their solicitations have been embarrassing, and they have offered to carry me through the slime and tangled roots. 609

Early one morning two Yulengor left with me on a launch to take medical aid to a horde about thirty miles from Yirrkala. Shortly afterwards the engine gave trouble, and after I had set this right a spark escaped from the magneto cable and ignited petrol fumes in the cabin and exploded the fuel. In a few moments the boat was hopelessly ablaze from stem to stern and we had to dive overboard to extinguish the flames on our limbs and clothing. We were then about a mile from a small rocky island and started to swim toward it, but my knees were badly burnt and I was floundering badly. The boys then closed in and told me to put a hand on either of their shoulders, and in this way they helped me ashore. One boy was uninjured and swam the channel to the mainland for a canoe in which we hoped to make our way home. Whilst he was away the other lad regaled me with stories of several fatal shark attacks, and casually remarked that while I had been tinkering with the engine they had watched a twelve-foot shark cruising round the launch. Aboriginal courage is of the highest order, and their loyalty and devotion are above question. They make no parade of noble and unsuspected qualities, for they are among the natural attributes of the race and are accepted as a matter of course. 123 [577]

After a long patrol, Northern Territory troopers had captured two troublesome nomads and were taking them to jail, but when they were crossing a flooded creek the white men lost their horses and were carried downstream. The 648 577

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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nomads themselves reached the bank of the creek, but seeing the plight of their captors they unhesitatingly dived in again and brought them to safety. The incident made a wide appeal and was hailed as something new in the make-up of the aboriginal. Soon afterwards a well-known Territorian, who had been born and reared among aboriginals, was taxed with being unappreciative of their high qualities, and he expressed the nomad's usual attitude to these things by saying: 'What is all the fuss about? They are like that.'

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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cripple and soon weakened. He told his brother that he could not go any farther, and calmly preparing to go down he gave away his one and only valuable possession: 'When you get ashore, you can have my tomahawk,' he said. With the usual aboriginal courage, loyalty, and determination, the older man returned to his brother, and by keeping him afloat, and making use of tide and waves, they were washed ashore in an exhausted state on the sandy island, where they remained three days without water or shade. At the end of that time they made a smoke-fire from a wood-drill and drift-wood, and they were rescued by friends from the mainland, who came to see why the brothers were camping on the island.

We were walking along one of the open-sea beaches when an old man told me the tale of the nautilus shell. He said in effect: 'We call it a moon-shell.' I asked what it had to do with the moon, and was told that the old moon dies once a month and throws this, his skeleton, into the sea. The moon dies, and after the lapse of a few days his spirit is reincarnated and appears as a new moon. I began to understand then why a nomad on seeing a new moon joyfully shouts the news to the camp. Men, women, and children rejoice together as over the return of a long-absent friend.

A long time ago a man camped beside a lagoon in the mountains. Life had dealt kindly with him, but in spite of his pleasant surroundings and good food supply he wanted to live in the sky. At night the Evening Star tantalizingly twinkled in the rippling lagoon, till the man could stand it no longer, so he climbed into the sky. His plan had been carefully thought out: 'I will live with the stars and outshine them till I am an old man, and when I die I will put my spirit in a new body.'

'Ngalindi' goes through this cycle every lunar month, and